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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 MOSCOW 000144

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SUBJECT: U/S BURNS' MOSCOW MEETINGS

Classified By: DCM Eric S. Rubin for reasons 1.4(b, d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) In meetings with DFM Ryabkov, Presidential Advisor Prikhodko and Putin advisor Ushakov January 13-14, U/S Burns reiterated the U.S. desire to conclude the START follow-on treaty quickly and pursue an aggressive arms control program in 2010 including the NPT revcon and the Nuclear Security Summit. GOR officials voiced support for the U.S. agenda, but cautioned that the Russian military remains resistant, so the treaty must clearly reflect mutual interests. Medvedev will visit Canada for the Olympics and the G8/G20 and could schedule a Washington visit around the latter; Putin is also interested in visiting the U.S. Ryabkov indicated Russia's willingness to move to the pressure track, notwithstanding Moscow's conviction that sanctions will not change Iran's behavior. Ushakov chronicled Russia's souring relations with Iran and voiced no hope that the dynamics inside Iran will allow for more flexibility on the nuclear issue anytime soon. FM Lavrov will participate in the London conference on Afghanistan and Russia is seeking opportunities to raise its profile in the MEPP including by welcoming Abbas and Netanyahu in the coming weeks and offering to host a Quartet ministerial in the near future. On the Caucasus, Ryabkov repeated accusations that Georgia is rearming and threatening Russian forces in the region while the prospects for progress on Nagorno-Karabakh have improved slightly in the last year. Both sides expressed satisfaction with early results of the Bilateral Presidential Commission, but agreed delivering visible results will be critical in the coming months. End summary.

ARMS CONTROL/PRESIDENTIAL MEETINGS

2. (C) U/S Burns and DFM Ryabkov reaffirmed the high-level political will on both sides to conclude the START follow-on treaty as soon as possible, though Ryabkov suggested they avoid committing publicly to a deadline since three target dates have already been missed. U/S Burns previewed the upcoming visits by CJCS Mullen and NSA Jones as indications of the USG's interest in hammering out remaining differences quickly and expressed confidence that the treaty could be completed by the end of February.

3. (C) U/S Burns also voiced satisfaction with U.S.-Russian preparatory work on other elements of the arms-control agenda, including the upcoming Nuclear Security Summit and the NPT Review conference. He said the U.S. shares the Canadian goal of extending and expanding the Global Partnership. Ryabkov pledged continued close coordination with the U.S. on these issues and, on the NPT Revcon, said Russia wants a new P5 statement, but urged the U.S. to

continue a bilateral dialogue with Cairo to overcome Egyptian opposition. He added that, although he is not a proponent of artificial linkages, he believes progress on the MEPP would positively influence Egypt's attitude on the NPT.

14. (C) Ryabkov said the GOR was pleased with the December discussions on a Joint Threat Assessment on Missile Defense in Washington. He predicted both sides could conclude a joint paper by the end of the year and promised a Russian response to the U.S. draft soon. He added that both formal and informal contacts (as took place during the Washington visit) augment the level of trust and are important to reach this goal. Ryabkov stressed that Russia's position remains based on then-president Putin's 2007 proposals and that the GOR continues to support the Phased Adaptive Approach. Burns suggested, and Ryabkov concurred, also restarting MD discussions in the NATO-Russia Council.

15. (C) National Security Advisor Prikhodko told U/S Burns that convincing the Russian military to support our ambitious mutual non-proliferation objectives remains a challenge. He noted that Russia understands that the Administration has to be able to sell a new treaty to Congress to obtain ratification, but added that "you need to remember we have domestic politics here too." Prikhodko said Russia will participate enthusiastically in the Nuclear Security Summit. He noted that President Medvedev will be crossing the Atlantic frequently in the first half of this year, first to the Olympic closing ceremonies next month in Vancouver, then to the Washington summit, and then again to the G8/G20 meetings in Canada. He indicated that Medvedev would be

MOSCOW 00000144 002 OF 004

prepared to consider a working visit to Washington in connection with the latter, if the timing were mutually agreeable.

16. (C) Deputy Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, Yuriy Ushakov, told U/S Burns that a June-July summit before or after the G8/G20 meetings was worth exploring. On START, he said the Russian side would need some time after the Jones/Mullen visit to prepare for formal negotiations in Geneva. He emphasized that "there are opponents of this treaty here in this capital" and said it was important for both sides to be able to convince their domestic constituencies that the treaty was in both countries' national interests.

17. (C) Ushakov also said that Putin continues to look for a good "hook" to justify a visit to the U.S., and would be very interested in any suggestions the USG might have. He noted that Putin could not visit the U.S. too close to any Obama-Medvedev meetings, so schedule coordination is challenging, but "he is eager to visit if the appropriate opportunity can be found." Ushakov also said he hoped the Administration would submit the 123 Agreement to Congress for approval soon.

IRAN/AFGHANISTAN

18. (C) Discussing Iran, Burns praised the genuine partnership between Russia and the U.S. as highlighted by Russia's role in developing the TRR proposal. The U.S. remains committed to a dual-track approach using both pressure and diplomacy. Since Iran is refusing to engage seriously on the TRR proposal and other offers it is important to send a signal on the pressure track, for the sake of reinforcing the credibility of the P5 1 process and sending a broader message to nuclear aspirant states. He stressed that pressure is not an end in itself, but a way to encourage Tehran to engage diplomatically. Ryabkov accepted this reasoning and said that Russia would cooperate within the P5 1 framework to pursue a new UN Security Council resolution containing sanctions measures to put pressure on Iran. But he said Russia remains skeptical that sanctions

will prove effective based on the historic record. He expressed appreciation for the low-profile manner in which the U.S. is pursuing this effort. Ryabkov also said that, for the dual-track approach to work, the P5 1 should also consider offering additional incentives to encourage Iranian cooperation.

¶9. (C) Prihodko told U/S Burns that the GOR was "fed up" with Iranian behavior, in particular the "consistent lack of transparency on decision-making." He commented that Russia believes the Iranian hard-liners have a vested interest in not making progress toward a diplomatic solution: "conflict and hostility are their life-blood." In response to U/S Burns' call for continued Russian restraint on S-300 transfers, Ushakov said that Russia believes Tehran is angry at the GOR for not shipping the S-300s and for supporting consideration of sanctions in the P5 1 negotiations. He said Russia was committed to working with the US and other partners to achieve resolution of the Iranian nuclear problem, but "can't be seen as always following the U.S.-please let us be seen as leading sometimes."

¶10. (C) U/S Burns noted positive U.S.-Russian cooperation on Afghanistan with the Lethal Transit agreement, expressed hope for additional joint work on counter-narcotics, and welcomed Russian interest in economic reconstruction projects. Ryabkov said Russia wants to increase cooperation in 2010 and expressed interest in the idea of Afghan neutrality suggested in the discussion paper for the London Conference. He confirmed FM Lavrov will lead the GOR delegation. Ryabkov welcomed stepped-up cooperation on CN, Russia's top priority in Afghanistan, and also urged the U.S. to consider a UNSC resolution calling for markers on precursor chemicals to help limit their in-flow into Afghanistan. Ryabkov characterized the remaining issues on the Lethal Transit agreement as "peanuts" which will be resolved quickly. Prihodko said Russia "well understood the serious responsibility that President Obama has taken on himself and his Administration to improve the situation in Afghanistan," adding that "Russia will do the maximum possible to help and coordinate there."

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS/YEMEN

MOSCOW 00000144 003 OF 004

¶11. (C) On the MEPP, U/S Burns said we were looking at FM Lavrov's proposal for a Quartet Ministerial in Moscow and said Special Envoy Mitchell will follow up with DFM Sultanov. Ryabkov signaled Moscow will step up its activity in the region, including by hosting separate visits in the coming weeks by Abbas and Netanyahu. Burns also said the U.S. wants to strengthen the Syria-Israel track, either independently or through Turkey, notwithstanding the current friction between Tel Aviv and Ankara. Ushakov told U/S Burns that PM Netanyahu will be in Moscow in late February - "this time his visit won't be such a secret" - and said that both Medvedev and Putin would engage with him intensively on both Iran and MEPP.

¶12. (C) Ryabkov queried Burns on Yemen, noting that, in contrast to Somalia, Sanaa does have some institutional capacity to address pressing issues, such as military capabilities against piracy. Burns summarized the daunting resource and political challenges, the most pressing of which is Al Qaeda, facing the Yemeni government. He stressed the need for Saudi Arabia and the Emirates to work with the international community to help Yemen, noting the international meeting on Yemen before the London Afghanistan conference.

CAUCASUS/UKRAINE

¶13. (C) Ryabkov rehashed familiar Russian complaints that Georgia is engaged in a military build-up and acquiring

heavy weapons, some of which are positioned close to the Russian border. He said Russia favors the adoption of a "non use of force" agreement through the Geneva process. He also asked that the U.S. issue visas to representatives from South Ossetia and Abkhazia so they can attend meetings in New York, claiming there is precedent for representatives of entities not recognized by the U.S. to receive visas.

¶14. (C) Burns thanked Russia for its active and constructive engagement on the Nagorno Karabakh issue and on Turkey-Armenia reconciliation. Ryabkov said Russia was using PM Erdogan's concurrent Moscow visit to push Turkey to ratify the protocols with Armenia even absent progress on Nagorno Karabakh and that Lavrov was doing the same in Yerevan. Overall on Nagorno-Karabakh, Ryabkov was guarded, saying the chances for success are "somewhat higher" than a year ago. Ushakov said that Putin's meeting with Erdogan the day before had been focused on energy issues. Prikhodko said that Medvedev had pushed Erdogan on ratification of the protocols during their meeting. He also confirmed that Medvedev would invite Presidents Sargsisian and Aliyev to Sochi on January 23 to push the two sides to make progress under the framework established by the Minsk Group.

¶15. (C) Prikhodko told U/S Burns that the GOR is not supporting any candidate in the Ukrainian elections. He said the Russian leadership was impressed by Serhiy Thipko, but was not picking favorites, except to say that "any of the candidates would be better than Yushchenko," adding that "we will work cooperatively with whomever wins."

VENEZUELA

¶16. (C) Burns called on Russia to exercise restraint in selling Manpads to Venezuela, which has transferred such weapons to the FARC, which in turn targets Americans. Ryabkov claimed the GOV has been cooperative on end-use inspections of weapons and there has been "no cases of abuse." He added that border tension between Venezuela and Colombia has decreased and Russia is not contributing to instability there.

AIR MARSHALS MOU

¶17. (C) In light of the Christmas Day terrorist attempt, Burns requested Russia again consider a U.S.-proposed MOU permitting, on a reciprocal basis, air marshals on U.S.- and Russia-flagged commercial air carriers. Ryabkov said the proposal is with the Ministry of Transport and he will follow up and provide an answer.

MEAT TRADE/SANCTIONS

MOSCOW 00000144 004 OF 004

¶18. (C) In his meeting with Prikhodko, U/S Burns raised our concerns that a substantial volume of trade in chicken and pork was being disrupted by protectionist measures in the guise of health and safety controls. He noted that a senior USDA delegation would be arriving in Moscow the following week. Prikhodko said he understood our concerns but noted that Russia was simply seeking to harmonize its regulations with the EU. He also said that Russia would welcome the lifting of U.S. export control violation sanctions on Russian companies as a "positive gesture." Ushakov told U/S Burns that in Turkish PM Erdogan's recent visit to Moscow, Putin had told him that there might be new opportunities for Turkish chicken producers to enter the Russian market if American exporters failed to comply with new Russian safety regulations. (Trade issues were also discussed in U/S Burns' meeting with DPM Shuvalov, septel.)

BILATERAL PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION

¶19. (C) During a discussion on the Bilateral Presidential Commission, EUR DAS Russell and Ryabkov agreed the Commission is one tool to diversify the relationship beyond arms control and to achieve concrete results. Ryabkov noted that the Commission and the relationship as a whole have accomplished a great deal given the state of the relationship one year ago. He added that the key now in the BPC is to produce deliverables and that we use the Commission for discussions on issues such as the poultry dispute to ensure such problems do not become "politicized" (Note: notwithstanding PM Putin's pointedly political statements on the issue the previous day).

¶20. (C) Edward Malayan, the MFA BPC coordinator, said the recent joint statement on the Commission was a positive signal to the public and to those participating in the work that the process is moving forward, but he added that "we sugar-coated" the statement because not much has been accomplished. He urged both sides to think creatively about big projects that could spotlight positive cooperation between our countries such as Apollo-Soyuz or work on the super-collider. Russell agreed the BPC needs to transition from a focus on process to results and noted the urgency of this task since the one-year anniversary of the BPC is fast approaching.

¶21. (C) The subject of the Commission was also raised in U/S Burns' meeting with Prikhodko. Prikhodko said Russia agreed that we need to show concrete progress on multiple fronts in our relationship this year, and the Commission would be a key vehicle for making things happen. Ushakov told U/S Burns that he was glad that Deputy Presidential Chief of Staff Surkov would be in Washington later this month for the first Civil Society Working Group session and other meetings. "He is an important guy, and this is an important channel to develop," Ushakov said.

¶22. (U) U/S Burns cleared this message.
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